QUESTIONS FOR JOINT NIH STRIDES INITIATIVE & INTERNET2 CALL – JUNE 4, 2020

1. **Which researchers are eligible to use STRIDES?**
   National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded researchers with an active NIH award may take advantage of the STRIDES Initiative for their NIH-funded research projects. Eligible investigators, referred to as Designated Recipients, include awardees of NIH contracts, other transaction agreements, grants, cooperative agreements, and other agreements.

2. **How can we identify the researchers eligible?**
   Eligibility to directly consume cloud services at NIH-negotiated rates via the STRIDES Initiative is limited to investigators currently funded by NIH, as determined by documentation of an active award number with an active period of performance (awards or agreements in a no-cost extension period are considered active awards). Visit the [Funding page](#) on the NIH Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools (RePORT) site to look up award recipients by location and organization.

3. **Must a researcher's funding come from NIH in order to be eligible for the program?**
   Yes. Institutions and investigators are welcome to discuss alternatives with cloud service providers to potentially enable program participation by researchers with other funding sources, but currently STRIDES only applies to NIH-funded researchers.

4. **Is STRIDES a cloud credit program (i.e., coupon codes provided by cloud providers at the direction of NIH) or a grant program (i.e., NIH provides funding directly to pay cloud expenses)?**
   Neither. STRIDES enables access to favorable pricing for commercial cloud services, which designated recipients can then use their existing NIH award funds to obtain. Designated Recipients are permitted to use their NIH award funds (contracts, other transaction agreements, grants, cooperative agreements, and other agreements) to pay for the consumption of cloud services via the STRIDES Initiative, unless directed otherwise by programmatic requirements or in the terms and conditions of the award.

   In most cases, the Institution/Organization employing the Designated Recipient is responsible for establishing a financial accounting relationship with the billing and administrative partner of one or more cloud service providers (CSPs) participating in the STRIDES Initiative, and then may establish accounts for the Designated Recipients at the Institution/Organization so that the eligible investigators can pay for cloud services costs using NIH award funds. NIH does not have an official role in the establishment of this financial accounting relationship and is not party to the agreement between the Institution/Organization and the billing partner; however, all relevant policies regarding the use of NIH funds still apply.

5. **How do researchers access STRIDES funding for use on Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Google Cloud Platform (GCP)? Is there or will there be a program for Azure?**
   The STRIDES Initiative does not provide funding directly to researchers; rather, it enables access to NIH-negotiated rates, professional services, and training opportunities. Funding for services provided by the current partners will come from current/active NIH-funded awards (grants, cooperative agreements, contracts, and other transaction agreements) that require these cloud services.

   While there is mutual interest between NIH and Microsoft to include Azure as a STRIDES Initiative partner, there is no agreement in place nor any definitive timeline for when might be in place.

6. **Can these accounts be added to existing AWS Organizations and/or G Suite Domains?**
   New GCP STRIDES accounts can be brought under an existing domain in Google Cloud. For AWS, the current setup requires that all STRIDES accounts must be moved under a Four Points Technology consolidated billing ("master

payer") account, which is itself an AWS Organization, in order to receive STRIDES enterprise discount program pricing and other benefits. Therefore, an institution would need to maintain separate AWS Organizations for its non-STRIDES accounts and its STRIDES accounts (with at least the latter being associated with Four Points). NIH, AWS, and Four Points are actively exploring options to potentially reduce this level of complexity, but no solutions are in place at this time.

7. **How do researchers learn about the STRIDES program?**
To learn about the STRIDES Initiative, please visit datascience.nih.gov/STRIDES, cloud.cit.nih.gov, and/or email the NIH STRIDES Initiative team at STRIDES@nih.gov.

When you are ready to move forward with STRIDES, please work with your campus cloud team to begin the process.

8. **How do researchers gain access to the STRIDES Initiative benefits?**

In order for your institution's NIH-funded researchers with active NIH awards to get access to the STRIDES Initiative and take advantage of its benefits, there are two steps involved:

1. **Enrolling** – Your institution can choose one or both STRIDES Initiative partner(s) (AWS or Google Cloud) to move forward with and sign an agreement with their respective billing and administrative partner (Four Points Technology or Carahsoft, respectively). If you select Google Cloud, you may elect to use the Carahsoft Internet2 NET+ Google Cloud program as a base. These agreements enable your NIH-funded researchers with active NIH awards to take advantage of the favorable pricing and resources offered. There is no financial obligation by signing an agreement.

2. **Provisioning** – Once the agreement is signed, NIH-funded researchers with active NIH awards can 1) create a new account, or 2) link an existing account to access to the favorable pricing and other benefits offered through the STRIDES Initiative.

9. **How long does it take from selection of a partner until accounts are ready to use?**
Most accounts can be set up within two weeks after receipt of a completed billing agreement; often, accounts are created within only a few days after the billing agreement is completed.

10. **I already have a direct agreement with a STRIDES Initiative partner that offers my institution different or perhaps better pricing than available via STRIDES. Can I keep those discounts or combine the discounts?**
NIH has pre-negotiated discounts that participants will receive when enrolling in the STRIDES Initiative. Therefore, existing agreements (and their associated discounts) will not apply to or be combined with accounts leveraging the STRIDES Initiative.

11. **I already have a different reseller I work with for my AWS or GCP accounts. How will this work?**

- **AWS** – If you have accounts with AWS, you will not at this time be able to stay with your current reseller as part of the STRIDES Initiative. You can still enroll in the STRIDES Initiative by using the billing and administrative partner, Four Points Technology, who is the sole reseller for STRIDES Initiative-eligible accounts. You may maintain your current reseller for your other AWS accounts.

- **Google Cloud** – If you have accounts with Google Cloud, there is some flexibility and certain resellers can enter into an agreement with Carahsoft to enable researchers to maintain existing reseller relationships while participating in the STRIDES Initiative. You can reach out to Carahsoft at NIHSTRIDES@carahsoft.com to learn more.

12. **Do I need to sign a business associate agreement (BAA) with the STRIDES Initiative partner and/or billing and administrative partner?**

    If your data includes protected health information (PHI) then you need a BAA for your workloads. There are several options:

    - You can sign a new BAA with the billing and administrative partner (Four Points Technology and/or Carahsoft);

    - You can sign a new direct BAA with the STRIDES Initiative partner (AWS and/or Google Cloud) for the accounts that are moving to the STRIDES Initiative; or

    - You can transfer an existing BAA to the billing and administrative partner (Four Points Technology and/or Carahsoft).

13. **What safeguards/guardrails are available on the cloud platforms to limit accidental cost overages?**

    Both STRIDES Initiative partners have native tools that monitor and alert your institution based on spend; however, these tools alone will not prevent accidental cost overages. There are other tools and applications offered by STRIDES billing and administrative partners, as well as third-party applications, that can be used to create guardrails that can mitigate cost overages. Similar to information security, cost control should be viewed as a shared responsibility between the partner (who will provide you with some tools and recommendations) and your institution (who is responsible for implementing code wisely and for regular monitoring and awareness of their accounts).

14. **How are facilities and administrative (F&A) or indirect costs applied to cloud costs under the STRIDES Initiative?**

    F&A and indirect costs are applied to cloud costs according to your institution's policy.

15. **What happens to my information if I no longer have an active NIH award?**

    Once you no longer have an active NIH award, the storage of your information must be funded through another source, or moved, unless you make other arrangements with NIH.

16. **Is training available as part of STRIDES Initiative participation?**

    Yes. You will have access to a variety of digital and on-demand training opportunities such as the Digital Training Learning Library for training in AWS and the Coursera Learning Platform for training in GCP. A customized curriculum can also be created.

    To sign up to receive additional information on the NIH STRIDES Initiative training offerings, or to suggest future training topics, email STRIDES@nih.gov.